

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-14 and 17-49 are pending in this application. Claims 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 45, and 49 are amended, and support for the amendment is found in the original Claims 12-16. Claims 13, 15, and 16 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 1-11 are withdrawn from consideration. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 25, 43, and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite; Claims 12-15, 18, 23, 26-27, 29-34, 39-40, 43, and 45-49 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Toda (U.S. Publication No. 2001/0017645); Claims 41, 42, and 44 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Toda in view of Yokoyama (U.S. Publication No. 2004/0041992); Claims 35-38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Toda in view of Azumai et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,320,682, hereinafter Azumai); Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Toda in view of Kanehashi (Japanese Publication No. 11-231240); Claims 16, 19-22, 24, 25, and 28 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims; and Claim 25 was indicated as allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph.

The Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 16, 19-22, 24, 25, and 28. Accordingly, amended Claim 12 corresponds to Claim 16 rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that amended Claim 12 is patentably distinguished over the cited references of record, and it is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn. Likewise it is respectfully submitted that Claims 14 and 17-44, which depend from Claim 12, are allowable at least because of their dependent recitation of the features of amended Claim 12.

Further, independent Claims 45 and 49 are amended to include similar features to amended Claim 12, and therefore, it is respectfully requested that the rejection to Claims 45 and 49, and Claims 46-49 depending therefrom, be withdrawn.

With regard to the 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, rejection to Claims 25, 43, and 44, Claims 43 and 44 are amended to recite “or” instead of “and/or,” thereby obviating the rejection stated in the outstanding Office Action on page 3, line 17 to page 4, line 10. Further, amended Claim 12 provides antecedent basis for “the pressing means” in Claim 25. Therefore, it is respectfully that the rejection to Claims 25, 43, and 44 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance, and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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